DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 034 755 TE 001 505

AUTHOR Allan, Jan
TITLE An Imaginary Community--Hotel.
INSTITUTION Centre for Information on the Teaching of English, Edinburgh (Scotland).
PUB DATE Jan 69
NOTE 3p.
JOURNAL CIT CITE Newsletter (Centre for Information on the Teaching of English); v2 n2 p16-7 Jan 1969

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.25
DESCRIPTORS *Class Activities, Creative Writing, *English Instruction, Integrated Activities, Letters (Correspondence), Oral Communication, Role Playing, *Student Projects

ABSTRACT

An English class at Newtyle Secondary School, Scotland, spent four periods a week for 6 weeks on an anthological project entitled "hotel". Students assumed roles in an imaginary hotel community, wrote advertisements, brochures, and business letters, and participated in interviews, discussions, and dramatizations of specific hotel problems. Besides offering opportunities for students to participate in various English skills, the project was well received by the students. (MP)

ED034755

C I T E N E W S L E T T E R

CENTRE FOR INFORMATION ON
THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY C. I. T. E. and Author TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

VOL. 2 NO. 2 JANUARY, 1969

TE001 505

CONTENTS

THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE ON ENGLISH
W. A. Gatherer, Ph.D., H.M.I.S., Chairman

AMERICANS LOOK AT THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH
T. M. Brown, Director

EARLY STAGES—PROJECT WORK
L.D.C.s and The Teacher
The Anthological Project: Trevor Johns, Principal Teacher of English, Montrose Academy
Anthological Project: Charles Langan, Principal Teacher of English, St Augustine's Secondary School, Glasgow
An Imaginary Community: Miss Jan Allan, Assistant Teacher of English, Newtyle Secondary School, Angus

THE CERTIFICATE OF SIXTH YEAR STUDIES
ENGLISH: THE DISSERTATION
A. McCluckie, Principal Lecturer in English, Aberdeen College of Education

FICTION FOR CHILDREN—PRIMARY SCHOOL
Ian M. Milligan, Lecturer in Education, University of Stirling

A SITTING-THING
A. L. Taylor, M.A., D.Litt., Principal Teacher of English, Cumnock Academy

THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN MODERN STUDIES
James McGrath, Deputy Headmaster, St Pius Secondary School, Glasgow

C.I.T.E. NOTES

REVIEWS OF TEXTBOOKS

BOOKS RECEIVED

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

An Imaginary Community—Hotel

MISS JAN ALLAN
Assistant Teacher of English, Newtyle Secondary School, Angus

Newtyle is a comprehensive two-year school of approximately 120 pupils, its catchment area being rural. In session 1967-68 we organised on "common course" lines, with a 1st Year intake of 58, divided into two genuine mixed ability groups. The IQs of the first group ranged between 78 and 129, and the second 70 minus and 120.

It was decided to organise various anthological projects between mid-October and the beginning of the Christmas holidays. Initially, rather than embark on two "unknown" and a way perhaps somewhat formidable approaches, it was decided that one class should try the fairly conventional project of producing a magazine while the other class should be more venturesome and attempt to become and "live" as an imaginary community. Although, in the event, there was interesting cross-fertilising between the two, it is with the working of the imaginary community that this article is concerned. The planned duration was of six weeks, four periods each week, 24 periods in all. This left three periods a week for other work in English.

For our imaginary community we chose "Hotel," since this choice did not seem to require, for the English work involved, any great expert knowledge and I thought it would adequately cater for the interests of the pupils, both boys and girls. The "Hotel" operated mainly as a classroom project, but we were fortunate in having a local hotelier to speak to the children who, having taken the whole idea seriously, posed many questions, thus laying a foundation of knowledge.

As must be done with any project, we made a list of the end-products to come from the project or be developed through it:

Written

Advertisements (graded)
Letters of application
Letters accepting posts
Brochure
Diary of a guest
Report for holiday guide
Letters of complaint
Description of emergencies affecting different departments.

Oral

Discussion on location and name of hotel
Interviews
Discussion on perfect guest
Discussion on unpopular guest
Emergencies in various departments
Coach parties
Breathalyser—moral problems involved
Dramatised situations.

Obviously to start with the work was entirely oral, involving class discussion on a suitable location for the hotel, its name, size and other related matters. It was in this activity that I became aware of just how fully committed the children were to the idea: motivation had certainly been provided for all subsequent work. They branched into such questions as accessibility for staff and guests, facilities to be offered, size in relation to maintenance costs, etc. Even the name was anything but a random selection —KINBANON—embracing the three school "houses," Kinpurnie, Bannatyne and Hatton.

Thereafter, of course, oral and written work were interspersed and complemented each other.

For oral work every child was interviewed by *their* previously selected manager and manageress. This proved to be a time-consuming process—to be curtailed in future, but not omitted, for each child must feel part of this imaginary community if it is to be a success. Competition in the interviews was keen and disappointment acute when someone failed to get a job. Imaginary emergencies in the various departments of the hotel afforded opportunities for impromptu dramatised situations, and we had the expected play about a burglary on the premises. In discussion, some of which was taped and played back, children demonstrated their ability to appreciate the position of hotel staff and their attitude to guests by expressing their views on good and bad guests.

As far as the written end-products were concerned, advertisements in newspapers were studied and compared before the children composed their own for KINBANON HOTEL, or for the individual posts for which they wrote applications. The class studied the AA system of hotel classification and composed the entry for their own hotel. After a class lesson had been taught on the formal layout and exposition of the letter, all wrote letters applying for posts and subsequently letters accepting the posts. Not everyone was expected to tackle the more advanced writing forms involved in the brochure or the guest's diary. Experience showed that while the children more able in English will want, or can be easily led, to tackle the more challenging kinds of writing, sometimes the less able were keen to try—and they should never be discouraged.

So far I have confined myself to a condensed account of what was my own and the pupils' first anthological project. What follows is an attempt to evaluate it for those who may be in the uninitiated position I myself was in last October.

Overall I think our imaginary community was a success. There is no doubt that the children were fully involved in it, and I think the whole idea appealed to them, which, of course, is the initial requirement. Obviously it had its drawbacks: not all the children were familiar with the concept of hotel life — though here again they were *learning* something—and thus assignments have to be carefully chosen in relation to the amount of background knowledge available. Much and careful pre-planning is essential, but with each new project an increasing fund of knowledge of "do's" and "don't's" is acquired. If the project did offer opportunities for exercising different varieties of English skills, e.g. role playing, letter writing, narrative-descriptive and creative writing, I freely admit that I found it very difficult to supply reading material. The only direct reading involved comparison of brochures and advertisements. It was in this connection that the three non-project periods per week were invaluable, for they were used to develop other aspects of English not touched in the Hotel project, including basic matters of spelling and remedial work of various kinds.

But even if in this initial attempt some of the other aspects of English work were not built into the project process, one can envisage other imaginary communities that would allow a greater deployment of English skills. An ever-present danger in a project is that for some pupils the work may deteriorate into mere fact-gathering, for one does find the kind of pupil who is content to copy information from a book. Therefore I think that in planning one should avoid placing too much dependence on factual material and, instead, try to ensure that the work assignments are sufficiently varied in nature and interesting enough to capture their attention, so increasing their experience. Role playing I hold to be of great importance. A place should be found for it in any project designed for 1st Year pupils, who are at the happy stage when they can actively enjoy casting themselves in a variety of roles without the effect being spoiled by self-consciousness, which comes too quickly.

I was most dubious about the entire suggestion of anthological projects and felt I was much happier with a textbook in front of me, knowing exactly what was expected of me and of the pupils, but I can confidently say that the change has been good for the children. I find they are more self-sufficient and ready to work on their own. It is surprising, for example, the amount of research they will carry out when project-motivated, and the lengths to which they will go to ensure their facts are accurate. It is a common feature for a child to *request* to continue work at home or during school intervals. The English room may not be the quiet place it once was, but I hope and think that the constant buzz—and sometimes it can be more than that — is of purposeful conversation, as the pupils have more opportunity for discussing work with each other.

I found it interesting to note, when comments were invited from the children, that many of them entirely dissociated the project approach from the English they once knew. They regarded the two as quite separate subjects. The thread running through their comments was that of enjoyment—the other side, that of work, is the province of the planning teacher who has to build into the enjoyment the skills they have to learn.